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CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-07 H-01 INR-10 L-03 NSAE-00
NSC-05 PA-01 SP-02 SS-15 ICA-11 /109 W
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P 222148Z AUG 80
FM AMEMBASSY BUENOS AIRES
TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 6490
INFO AMEMBASSY ASUNCION
AMEMBASSY BRASILIA
AMEMBASSY BRUSSELS
USMISSION GENEVA
AMEMBASSY LA PAZ
AMEMBASSY ROME
AMEMBASSY SANTIAGO
USMISSION USUN NEW YORK
USCINCSO QUARRY HTS

ARGENTINA PROJECT (S2000000044)
U.S. DEPT. OF STATE, A/RPS/IPS
Margaret P. Grafeld, Director
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[REDACTED] SECTION 1 OF 2 BUENOS AIRES 6781

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E.O. 12065: XDS-4 8/22/00 (RUSER, CLAUS W.) OR-M
TAGS: SHUM AR
SUBJECT: HUMAN RIGHTS SUMMARY - AUGUST 9-22, 1980

REF: BUENOS AIRES 6398

1. [REDACTED] SUMMARY: POLITICIANS AND INTELLECTUALS RALLIED
TO THE CUASE OF THE DISAPPEARED AND DETAINED. HUMAN
RIGHTS SOURCES FEEL THAT IT IS THE BEGINNING OF A WAVE
OF PUBLIC INTEREST IN THIS SUBJECT. HOWEVER, POLITICANS
BELIEVE THE ISSUE IS ONLY BEING EXPLOITED BY THEIR OWN
[REDACTED] ILK IN THEIR DEALINGS WITH THE MILITARY GOVERNMENT. IN
[REDACTED]

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HIS VIEW LOW POLITICS RATHER THAN HIGH PRINCIPLE IS THE
NAME OF THE POLITICAL GAME. WE HAVE A MORE PRECISE FIX

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OF PEN PRISONERS WHO NUMBER 1,226. A DISAPPEARED
REAPPEARS. END SUMMARY.

2. (U) DISAPPEARED AND DETAINED: THE DISAPPEARED AND
DETAINED RECEIVED UNPRECEDENTED PUBLICITY OVER THE PAST
TWO WEEKS:

A) 180 PROMINENT ARGENTINS SIGNED A PUBLIC DECLARATION
--PRINTED IN THE MAS CIRCULATION CLARIN--ASKING TH
GOVERNMENT TO PUBLISH THE NAMES OF MISSING PERSONS AND
TO GIVE INFORMATION ON THEIR WHEREABOUTS. THE LIST OF
SIGNATORS INCLUDED NOT ONLY PEOPLE ALREADY WELL KNOW
FOR THEIR PUBLIC IDENTIFICATION WITH THIS ISSUE BUT
ALSO OTHER NEW AND IMPRESSIVE NAMES. AS A RESULT, THE
LIST READS LIKE A PARTIAL WHO'S WHO OF ARGENTINE
POLITICS (RAUL ALFONSIN, HEIR APPARENT TO RADICAL LEADER
BALBIN--WHO DID NOT SIGN; DEOLINDO BITTEL, PERONIST
VICE PRESIDENT; OSCAR ALLENDE, OF THE INTRANSIGENT PARTY).
ARGENTINE INTELLECTUAL LIFE (LUIS JORGE BORGES, ERNESTO
SABATO) WAS ALSO WELL REPRESENTED AS WAS THE THEATER. ONE
OF THE MOST SIGNIFICANT NEW NAMES WAS THAT OF CESAR LUIS
MENOTTI, THE COACH OF ARGENTINA'S WORLD CUP SOCCER TEAM
AND A NATIONAL HERO.

B) THE RELATIVES OF THE MISSING AND DISAPPEARED HELD THEIR
PEACEFUL RALLY IN THE PLAZA DE MAYO AUGUST 14 AND HANDED
THEIR PETITION IN AT THE PRESIDENTIAL PALANCE. THE
DEMONSTRATION--ATTENDED BY ABOUT 700 PEOPLE--WAS WELL
COVERED BY THE LOCAL PRESS, SOME OF THICH REPORTED SNIPPETS
OF THE VERY TOUCH LANGUAGE CONTAINED IN THE PETITION IN-
CLUDING THE ASSERTION THAT THE GOVERNMENT HAS "ABSOLUTE
RESPONSIBILITY" FOR THE DISAPPEARANCES.

C) PERONIST RAUL MATERA, WHO DESPITE THE OBJECTIONS OF
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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BITTEL, MET WITH MINISTER OF INTERIOR HARGUINDEGUY AS A
PART OF THE "DIALOGUE" BETWEEN THE GOVERNMENT AND
POLITICIANS, EMERGED FROM THE MEETING WITH THE MINISTER
TO ISSUE A STATEMENT WHICH, AMONG OTHER THINGS, CALLED
UPON THE GOVERNMENT TO TRY OR RELEASE ALL THOSE BEING
HELD ON OTHER THAN COMMON CRIMINAL CHARGES (INCLUDING,
OF COURSE, ISABEL PERON) AND TO CLEAR UP THE FATE OF THE
DISAPPEARED.

COMMENT: HUMAN RIGHTS ACTIVISTS ARE, NATURALLY, VERY
LEASED BY THESE DEVELOPMENTS. THEY FEEL THAT THE DISAPPEARED
AND DETAINED ISSUE IS AT LAST ON ITS WAY TO BECOMING A
SIGNIFICANT ISSUE WITHIN ARGENTINA. THIS SORT OF PUBLIC

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DISCUSSION, THEY HOPE, WILL BLOW AWAY THE PUBLIC'S WELL-ESTABLISHED APATHY ON THE FATE OF THE DISAPPEARED AND THE DETAINED AND FINALLY FORCE THE ARGENTINE GOVERNMENT TO RESPOND IN A MEANINGFUL WAY, PARTICULARLY ON THE DISAPPEARED.

3. [REDACTED] SOME OF OUR POLITICAL FRIENDS TAKE A MORE JADEED VIEW. THEY DO NOT SEE THESE HUMAN RIGHTS CONCERNS AS EXISTING MUCH PUBLIC INTEREST TODAY' RATHER, THEY FEEL THAT THE ULTIMATE GOAL OF POLITICIANS--WITH CERTAIN HONORABLE EXCEPTIONS--IS TO NEGOTIATE WITH THE MILITARY FOR THE LATTER'S WITHDRAWAL FROM POWER. ONE ITEM IN THAT NEGOTIATION WOULD BE A GENERAL AMNESTY FOR THE MILITARY WHO PARTICIPATED IN THE "DIRTY WAR". BY RAISING THE DISAPPEARED ISSUE TODAY, OUR CYNICAL FRIENDS TELL US, THE POLITICIANS ARE REMINDING THE MILITARY THAT THEY HAVE MEANINGFUL CHIPS. THIS INTERPRETATION OF THE POLITICIANS' MOTIVATION IS SHARED BY SOME OF THE MILITARY POLITICIANS WE HAVE TALKED TO AND WHO ARE INVOLVED IN CHARTING THE GOA'S POLITICAL STRATEGY.

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4. [REDACTED] INTERESTINGLY, EVERYBODY SEEMS TO AGREE THAT THE POLITICIANS CAN RAISE THIS ISSUE BECAUSE OF THE MORE RELAXED POLITICAL CLIMATE THAT PREVAILS TODAY-- IN THE WORDS OF ONE POLITICIAN, "PEOPLE ARE NOT AS AFRAID AS BEFORE."

5. [REDACTED] THE DETAINED - HOW MANY?: MINISTER OF INTERIOR HARGUINDEGUY PRIVATELY TOLD REPRESENTATIVES OF EC-9 EMBASSIES LAST WEEK THAT THE GOA HAS 1,226 PEN PRISONERS. HARGUINDEGUY, WHO THEN LATER REPEATED ALMOST THE SAME FIGURES TO THE PRESS, BROKE DOWN THE PEN CATEGORIES AS FOLLOWS:

NO. CATEGORY

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408 IN TRIAL STATUS
107 SERVING SENTENCE AFTER TRIAL AND
CONVICTION
503 NOT IN TRIAL STATUS
208 UNDER PEN

AT THIS POINT WE, LIKE OUR EUROPEAN COLLEAGUES, ARE SOMEWHAT CONFUSED BY WHAT DIFFERENCE THERE IS IN THE LAST TWO CATEGORIES.

5. [REDACTED] OUR OWN ESTIMATES BASED ON PRISON VISITS BY OUR CONSULAR OFFICERS, CLAIMS BY HUMAN RIGHTS ORGANIZATIONS, AND PRIVATE STATEMENTS TO US [REDACTED] ALL SEEM TO AGREE ON ONE THING: THERE ABOUT 2,000 PEOPLE IN ARGENTINE JAILS ON OTHER THAN COMMON CRIMINAL CHARGES. THE GAP OF NEARLY 800 BETWEEN THIS FIGURE AND THAT GIVEN BY HARGUINDEGUY MAY BE ACCOUNTED FOR BY INDIVIDUALS WHO HAVE BEEN ARRESTED AND SENTENCED ON OTHER THAN PEN CHARGES. IT IS VERY HARD TO GET ANY CLEAR STATEMENT OUT OF THE GOA ON THE TOTAL NUMBER OF PEOPLE BEING HELD BUT OVER THE NEXT SEVERAL WEEKS WE WILL GO BACK TO OUR CONTACTS, ARMED WITH HARGUINDEGUY'S STATEMENT AND OUR OWN ESTIMATE AND TRY TO MAKE SOME GREATER SENSE OF THE SITUATION. IN ANY CASE, 2,000 SUCH PRISONERS IS A CONSIDERABLE DROP FROM THE 2,800 WE UNDERSTOOD THE GOA WAS HOLDING IN DECEMBER 1979.

[REDACTED] DISAPPEARED QUIETLY REAPPEARS: WE HAVE BEEN TOLD BY A USUALLY RELIABLE SOURCE THAT AN INDIVIDUAL WHO DIS-

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APPEARED LAST NOVEMBER AND SURFACED BRIEFLY IN DECEMBER AS A "VISITING DISAPPEARED" (BUENOS AIRES 2043) WAS FINALLY FREED BY ARGENTINE SECURITY SERVICES IN LATE APRIL. THE INDIVIDUAL REPORTEDLY CLAIMS THAT IN APRIL HE WAS HELD WITH ABOUT 11 OTHER PEOPLE AT A FACILITY SOMEWHERE TO THE SOUTH OF BUENOS AIRES. AT THE TIME HE WAS FREED HE WAS [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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TOLD THAT ALL THE OTHER DETAINEES WOULD NOT BE FREED AND WOULD INSTEAD BE KILLED. OUR SOURCE FOR THIS REPORT BELIEVES THAT THIS LATTER THREAT MAY HAVE BEEN DESIGNED TO FRIGHTEN THE INDIVIDUAL WHO WAS FREED.

8. [REDACTED] COMMENT: DURING THE PERIOD OF THIS MAN'S DETENTION THE GOVERNMENT SECURITY FORCES REPORTEDLY SCORED SEVERAL MAJOR SUCCESSES AGAINST MONTONERO ACTIVISTS WHO ATTEMPTED TO REINFILTRATE THE COUNTRY. IT IS POSSIBLE THAT SOME OF THE DETAINEES THAT WERE REPORTEDLY HELD WITH HIM ARE FROM AMONG MONTONEROS CAPTURED DURING THESE GOVERNMENT OPERATIONS. WE HAVE SPECULATED IN THE PAST THAT THE GOA PROBABLY RETAINS A SMALL NUMBER OF UNACKNOWLEDGED PRISONERS WHO ARE "TURNED MONTONEROS" USED IN OPERATIONS AGAINST THEIR FORMER COMRADES. IT SEEMS POSSIBLE THAT THIS FORMER DETAINEE WAS HELD WITH SUCH TURNED TERRORISTS --ESPECIALLY AS "COMMUNICATING DISAPPEAREDS" REPORTEDLY ARE DRAWN FROM AMONG MONTONERO COLLABORATORS. WE WILL BE SEEKING FURTHER INFORMATION AND NEWS BUT THE SOURCE OF THE REPORT STATES THAT THE INDIVIDUAL IN QUESTION IS, QUITE NATURALLY, VERY RETICENT ABOUT HIS EXPERIENCES.

9. [REDACTED] GOOD NEWS - BAD NEWS ON A ARREST: -SOCIALIST LABOR PARTY (PST) MEMBER JORGE EDUARDO SAEZ WHO WAS ARRESTED LAST JANUARY (BUENOS AIRES 1189) AND CHARGED WITH SUBVERSION BECAUSE HE WAS DISTRIBUTING LEAFLETS PROTESTING THE GOVERNMENT'S CLOSURE OF LUJAN UNIVERSITY HAS BEEN ABSOLVED OF ALL CHARGES BY A CIVILIAN JUDGE. AS WE REPORTED WHEN SAEZ WAS ARRESTED, PST MEMBERS FACED WITH SIMILAR CHARGES IN THE PAST SIMPLY DISAPPEARED, SO HIS ACQUITTAL AND RELEASE IS ALSO A FAVORABLE DEVELOPMENT. LESS POSITIVELY, SAEZ HAS REPORTED TO HUMAN RIGHTS ACTIVISTS THAT AFTER THE POLICE ARRESTED HIM, HE STATES, THEY TURNED HIM OVER TO A UNIT OF THE ARGENTINE AIR FORCE INTELLIGENCE LOCATED IN BUENOS AIRES. DURING INTERROGATION THIS UNIT BEAT HIM AND USED AN ELECTRIC [REDACTED]

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CATTLE PROD ON HIM. ONCE CONVINCED THAT HE DID NOT HAVE
TERRORIST CONNECTIONS THEY RETURNED HIM TO THE FEDERAL POLICE.

10. (U) PRISON SUICIDE REPORTED: THE PRESS REPORTS THAT
RAUL LUIS COMINATO, ACCUSED SUBVERSIVE COMMITTED
SUICIDE IN LA PLATA PRISON. DO DATE WAS GIVEN AND WE
HAVE NO INFORMATION IN OUR FILES ON COMINATO. RUSER
[REDACTED]

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